

the story of becoming a hero the hard way
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I don't own _How to Train Your Dragon_, or any of it's characters. That joy belongs to the wonderful Cressida Cowell, and Dreamworks Animation Studios. I'm just borrowing.

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><p>On Berk it is often said that a child born during a dragon raid has two possible outcomes in life, and the gods flip a coin to decide which it shall be.<p>

They can become a great viking warrior, even better than Eirikr Æzordvaldsson himself. Songs would be written of the great day of their birth, with singers eagerly awaiting every fresh feat that is conquered with fierce grace and prowess. Fierce beasts shall shudder and flee at the resounding screech of that first breath of life, daring only to approach when the child is still but a babe. Fully grown, they shall be unstoppable. Men from across the sea will eagerly offer up their lands and all goods in an effort to simply be seen with the great one. On and on the glories go, often making many soon-to-be parents drunk with the possibilities of honor and glory.

Then, there is the far less desired fate. The child will come out malformed, stunted in some way, or perhaps even soft in the head. Disaster will follow them wherever they go, if parents and gods alike are kind enough to allow them to live that long. Yet most expectants are far too enamored with the idea of greatness that they hardly ever consider the second option.

Valhallarama thinks nothing of either of these as an endless parade of midwives appear through her doorway. There is a idragon attack/i

currently in their midst, one of the worst they've had in the past fifty years, and these women are behaving as though they have fighters to spare! She is about to sit up and remind them of this, when a spasm of pain shoots through her lower section, immediately halting any words in her throat.

The birth cannot drown out the war outside, and yet Val hardly hears any of it. The usual stench of burning wood and seared flesh does not reach her nostrils. Instead, it's her heart that is in her ears, and the only thing she can smell is sweat and blood and herbs.

"To help with the agony." One of the women tell her. She realizes that it's Phlegma, and wants to demand just what does she think she is doing in here, before a fresh wave rocks through her.

She bears the pain as silently as she can - chin tucked down towards her chest, teeth gritted to lock in any screams. They tell her it is fine to indulge in what she is feeling, to let it out as loudly as she can. Val refuses to indulge them. She, who has bested Gronkles, and Nightmares, and Nadders alike, will not wail and cry while simply lying on a bed. She, who has beaten both Spitelout the Stern and Stoick the Vast at Thawfests and in physical combat, shall not -

Valhallarama bites her tongue to keep herself from screaming.

She chooses to curse her husband's name instead.

That helps too, she hears.

Outside, a Nadder shrieks for her.

Miss me, you foul devils?, Val thinks grimly as she pushes with all her strength. I'll be back soon enough for you. And one day, you shall deal with my child as well.

* * *

><p>The first time Stoick holds the babe, he finds himself in a situation where he does not know what to do. An incredibly rare moment, one that leaves him with a blank mind and edgy temperament.<p>

"Relax," calls a sleepy but stern Valhallarama from the birthing bed. The midwives had left not too long ago, leaving the new parents to spend time with the latest arrival on Berk. Sweat makes her skin gleam in the dull firelight, while pieces of dark auburn hair cling to her forehead and cheeks. She has fought one of the greatest battles in life, and has won twice over in not only keeping her life, but that of the babe's. He is in awe of her for that. Stoick knows many families are not that fortunate - his own brother, Spitelout, had lost his wife during the birth of their fifth.

He casts another look at the child. Pale and freckled already, with a slightly upturned nose and firmly shut eyes, the boy is swaddled in thick soft blankets and silks. They give an extra weight, even in Stoick's arms, but without them...

Stoick shifts. "Not much to him, is there?" He despises how uncomfortable he not only feels, but sounds as well. He was not made

to hold and coddle children, not even his own. His place has always been on the battlefield, besting dragons and invaders alike.

Val grunts. She maneuvers so that she is sitting up properly, before holding out her arms. Stoick reads the message loud and clear, and surrenders the boy to her willingly enough.

"I've given you a son," she tells him once the lad is nestled in her arms. It sounds like a warning. "Rejoice and be happy for that, Stoick. Your bloodline goes on for another generation."

But would it go on? The boy is small, and will no doubt be sickly in just days time. Born a runt. Already outcasted by size alone. The Thorston pair were born far larger than he, though any midwife could tell you that twins are often born smaller than single births. If it were not for Val's fiercely protective nature (something Stoick believes she was granted just to slight him), the ocean would have him soon enough. It would be the kindest course of action.

Freya has blessed Val with fertility. They are both still young. Having another child would be no problem.

His wife bluntly begs to differ. She is a warrior, not some brood mare. Their marriage was forged on the ability to make one another better, and she saw nowhere in the contract that stated he could simply take her to ride as he pleases.

He is proud, of course. Insanely proud. Bursting with joy at the seams over the fact that his first born is a son. But there is also the need to protect him, and the shame and worry of not knowing how long he must do that for.

She names him Hiccup, he learns later, through Gobber of all people. For his great-grandfather's twin brother. And his little personality.

Great Odin, the boy is only days old! Val has always enjoyed going against tradition, and he can think of several people who will be upset by this.

None can be more troubled than he, however.

The ones named Hiccup never survive, and that is simply a fact on Berk.

* * *

><p>So! That's it for this chapter. Consider it a prologue, if you will.

And to answer some questions: yep, it was common for highborn viking children to be wrapped up in silks after they were born. Vikings loved their silk.

For the most part, I took some viking facts (as well as some canon info) and just stretched it a little bit to fit the needs of the story. I am going to do my best to remain as accurate as possible, though.

Please R&R!

End
file.